



State Representative Diana Urban

Dear Neighbor,

Some really positive things came out of this session, and I am pleased that my colleagues in the General Assembly and I were able to:

- Provide residential tax relief by increasing the property tax exemption from \$350 to \$500
- Phase out the property tax on manufacturing machinery and eliminate the corporate tax surcharge for 2007 for our business community
- Increase funding for special ed
- Fully fund our teachers' retirement fund for the biennium
- Pay down a significant amount of long term debt
- Shore up the Rainy Day Fund
- Invest a significant amount of dollars in our transportation infrastructure and mass transit
- And complete a Pilot Program on Results Based Accountability In BUDGETS!

However, there were also important issues that were not addressed-- specifically, eminent domain and a comprehensive energy policy that recognizes that it is critical to promote alternative energy, conservation, and stable prices.

Please look through this brief report and, as always, contact me at 535-4429 with any questions or concerns you may have.

Sincerely,



Rep. Urban poses with Daisy the Pig during Agriculture Day at the State Capitol in March 2006. Daisy and her owner, Farmer Miner (originally of North Stonington), travel throughout the nation helping children learn to read by allowing them to read to Daisy.



State Representative

DIANA URBAN

Proudly Serving the 43rd District

North Stonington ★ Stonington

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2006 LEGISLATIVE REPORT



State Representative
DIANA URBAN
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Representative Urban confers with State Rep. Toni Boucher, R-Wilton, on the floor of the House during the 2006 Legislative Session.

ENVIRONMENT

Open Space

In an effort to preserve our precious open spaces, we have authorized anyone with a property interest to bring action against persons who engage in the serious problem of encroaching upon open space by installing buildings, driveways, and even swimming pools.

Clean Cars

In keeping with Connecticut's goal of lowering greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, I cosponsored legislation that implements a GHG labeling program for new vehicles sold or leased, from the 2009 model year and later. Cars are rated on a scale of 0 to 10 with 10 representing the lowest amount of GHG. The present average in CT is a 5. This program gives consumers information that will allow them to make a conscious choice about how much GHG they find acceptable in their purchase of a new vehicle.

Reclaiming Our Night Skies

House Bill 5051, which I cosponsored, prohibits the use of state funds for the replacement or installation of outdoor lights on state buildings and grounds that fail to maximize energy conservation or minimize light pollution. Not only will this improve the beauty of our night skies, it will also help minimize waste and save taxpayers' money in the long run.

HEALTHY FOODS

Connecticut has just passed the toughest school nutrition law in the nation. We banned the sale of soda and sugary beverages while also giving schools incentives to provide healthy snacks for purchase by students. The health problems associated with childhood obesity were the underlying impetus for the bill. I am a long-time supporter of promoting prevention when possible to decrease the demand for expensive health care procedures. Interestingly, after the General Assembly passed our law, Former President Bill Clinton worked out an agreement with the beverage industry that closely mirrored this initiative.

ANIMAL ISSUES

Thanks to the diligent work of advocates, we were able to pass House Bill 5795, which brings together stakeholders to formulate spay/neuter programs for animal companions of low income owners, as well as to address the issue of spaying and neutering feral cat populations.

I am a firm believer that we must break the cycle of violence that often begins with animal abuse and bullying behavior. Unfortunately, the Humane Education Bill, which would have helped address these issues, died in the Education Committee after being approved by the Environment Committee.

While the Animal Control Officer Training Bill also died in committee, recent problems with Hartford and Bridgeport animal control agencies continue to bring attention to these issues and will hopefully lead to the passage of this legislation in 2007. Likewise, I am committed to bringing back the Humane Ed bill next session.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

As you all know, I have been an ardent supporter of campaign finance reform. I am pleased to have cosponsored legislation that closes the loopholes in our new campaign finance law by:

- Including caps on expenditures made by party, legislative caucus, and political leadership Political Action Committees (PACs).
- Eliminating the 72 hour non-severability clause that otherwise makes the law inoperable.
- Enabling minority parties to petition for public finance eligibility.

PAWCATUCK AT&T AND COX CABLE

I was so pleased to work across state lines with State Senator Dennis Algiere from Rhode Island to help people calling from Pawcatuck to the Westerly 315 exchange. Calls from Westerly to Pawcatuck and vice versa have always been free local calls. When the 315 exchange was added, Pawcatuck residents were being charged 10 cents per minute for these calls. As we all know, this can add up and particularly be a burden to those on fixed incomes. I am happy to say that Senator Algiere and I were able to facilitate an agreement between the two companies and these will now be free local calls.



Representative Urban discusses pending legislation with Kristen McDonough, her intern for the 2006 Session, in the House Chamber.

TRANSPORTATION

Recognizing that economic growth and job creation can only occur with an overhaul of Connecticut's aging transportation infrastructure, the General Assembly passed legislation that will invest billions over the next decade. The "Roadmap for Connecticut's Economic Future" legislation includes a myriad of highway and mass transit projects along, and extending from, Interstates 95, 91, 84 and the 395 corridor. We managed to do this without tax increases or tolls.

RESULTS BASED ACCOUNTABILITY (RBA)

After 5 years of advocating for ACCOUNTABILITY in our BUDGET PROCESS, I was named co-chair of the RBA Work Group on the Appropriations Committee. I am thrilled that we completed our Pilot project and experienced great success. We had the cooperation of the state agencies, the Office of Policy and Management, the Office of Fiscal Analysis and the leaders of the General Assembly.

This Pilot project proved that we could go forward and work on changing the line item budget to a budgeting process that is accountable, transparent, and focused on results. The Working Group is already meeting on the next biannual budget.

STATE GRANTS FOR LOCAL PROJECTS

\$500,000 from the state's Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) will be used for improvements to Pawcatuck Park. There are plans to repair the dock at this site, thus providing better and safe access to the water and increasing our quality of life.

Another STEAP project will provide \$303,000 to extend the water line on Main Street in North Stonington. Water projects like these are vital to a community. I am pleased to have helped secure these bond funds and am very grateful for the support of Governor Rell and the Bond Commission. This funding will benefit the community for years to come.



Representative Urban meets with local schoolchildren during their tour of the State Capitol in May 2006.